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## ABSTRACT

The emerging Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is reviewed, focusing on those areas that are particularly relevant to the occupational needs of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID). Areas covered are scope, structure, and language. The following major points are made about the three areas: The scope of SOC accommodates paraprofessions through the use of combinations of the professional/technical and clerical divisions of the "Dictionary of Occupational Titles" (DOT), resulting in classifications which are particularly important to NTID since it trains persons for potential employment in some paraprofessional areas. Concerning structure, the most notable difference between the SOC and previous classifications is the inclusion of considerably more divisions (20) and the use of a numerical structure which is simple yet informative. (Two characteristics of SOC's numerical structure are discussed.) In SOC's language, sexist and age-referent terms have been eliminated (with a few exceptions). Appended are references, SOC's major suggested classes, and SOC's major divisions. (SH)

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Review of the  
Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)

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Introduction to NTID and  
Statement of the User's Need for an SOC

Employment conditions among deaf persons have been chronically depressed (see: Lunde & Bigman, 1959, and Crammatte, 1968). Severe underemployment, with the majority of participation restricted to the "secondary" labor force, has greatly reduced the lifetime earnings potential of deaf persons (Weinrich, 1972). These conditions, and others not mentioned, have deprived deaf persons from full participation in the American experience. To counteract these problems, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) was established by Public Law 89-36 to provide a "residential facility for the post-secondary technical training and education for persons who are deaf, in order to prepare them for successful employment."<sup>1</sup>

The NTID Policies, Guidelines, and Application Procedures (U.S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare, 1966) specified that "the Institute will create the opportunity for more deaf persons to engage in satisfying occupations that are consistent with the student's aspirations and ability and the requirements of society" (p. 3). To assist in accomplishing this directive, an occupational research section was created within NTID to investigate graduates' participation in the labor force. To this end, information is delineated, obtained and provided

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<sup>1</sup>Public Law 89-36, 89th Congress, H.R. 7031, June 8, 1965, Sec. 2.

about graduates' labor force participation to program managers in order that informed decisions can be made regarding the accomplishment of institutional objectives and goals (see Stufflebeam et al., 1971, for a detailed discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of occupational research).

A crucial part of providing information about employed graduates is the ability to correctly classify what kinds of work graduates are doing. Current classifications seem inappropriate due to lack of specificity or substantive inaccuracy caused by obsolescence. That there is a need for a standard occupational classification is obvious. Such a tool would allow greater information flow and certainly improve the compatibility of different data bases. For occupational research at NTID, the implementation of such a classification on a national basis would facilitate greater ease in data collection and analysis - neither of which are small tasks.

The following report is a review of the emerging Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). This review is not intended to be total in its scope, but rather to focus on those points that are particularly relevant to the needs of the Occupational Research Section of NTID. Specifically, those points for discussion are the scope, structure and language of the SOC.

#### Scope

Does the SOC have a base broad enough to be useful to a variety of potential users? Although the SOC is not a new or unique concept,

certainly a very large number of occupations are covered by this system. Included in the SOC is the entire classification system from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) (U.S. Department of Labor, Manpower Administration, 1965) and in addition, selected titles from the Census Classifications (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1971) are used when no comparable titles were available in the DOT. Further, the occupations included in the SOC represent a multitude of skill levels and types, facilitating use by a number of audiences.

One area of particular concern to NTID is the somewhat ambiguous area of the paraprofessions (for a further discussion of these occupations, see Stevenson, 1973). These occupations have generally emerged within the past decade, and since NTID trains persons for potential employment in some paraprofessional areas through sub-baccalaureate curricula, these classifications are particularly important for analytical purposes.

Excellent examples of the accommodation of paraprofessions in the SOC are unit groups 3794 (Data Processing Programmers) and 3796 (Legal Technicians). In both cases, representative job titles in each group are combinations of the professional/technical and clerical divisions of the DOT. The separation of technicians from professional and clerical categories creates a classification in the "middle range", which more accurately grasps the expanding nature of the world of work than the conceptualization of "professional, technical and kindred" as a homogeneous category. This serves to broaden the scope of the SOC and thus provides a more useful tool than previously available.

## Structure

The most notable difference between the SOC and previous classifications is the inclusion of considerably more divisions. Although, at first glance, the numbers of these divisions may seem formidable, this more detailed fractionation appears to accurately reflect the expanded and specialized disposition of the American world of work (see the Appendix for a list of the divisions and major classes).

It is indicated in the introductory statements of the manual that the twenty divisions may be collapsed into five broad classes for certain analytical purposes. These aggregations appear appropriate with the exception of the fifth, production occupations. Divisions N-Z include more than production related occupations; specifically division Y (military occupations). To include these two divisions as part of an aggregated category of production occupations would mislead one to conclude that this class is larger than it, in fact, is. In addition, military occupations represent jobs that are found across the breadth of all divisions and thus should be treated separately so as not to misrepresent this class substantively. Finally, miscellaneous occupations represent those occupations that are obsolescent, or misclassified, and for the same reasons should be treated as a separate category.

Generally, the numerical structure of the classification is simple, yet informative. Two anomalies should be noted, however. It is pointed out that the use of certain numbers in the second, third and fourth digits may indicate either supervisory or inspecting roles, or a "not elsewhere classified" status. Although these designations certainly

have utility and it is pointed out that they are not exclusive, they may be misleading. The only major groups, for example that have a '1' in the second digit to distinguish supervisory status are groups '11' and '71'. Other major groups that have a '1' as the second digit do not indicate supervising occupations. To use these types of designations non-exclusively, diminishes their meaningfulness and utility as an analytical tool; particularly for computer manipulations.

The second abnormality in the numerical structure impacts on the clarity of the five broad classes. The numbers used in the first digit of the codes are not mutually exclusive in some cases, when collapsed to represent the five major classifications. Specifically, division G has a '3' as the first digit although all other divisions in the class have a '1' or '2'. In addition, divisions L and M have the same first digit, although they are disaggregated into separate classes. And, finally, divisions Y and Z are included into one class, when they have a different first digit than all others in the same class. As noted previously, a greater degree of precision would be facilitated by treating divisions Y and Z as individual and separate categories.

#### Language

The language used in the SOC is a vast improvement over that used in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1965).<sup>1</sup> Not only is the elimination of sexist and age-referent language important from legal and

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted, however, that revisions were made in the language of the DOT (U.S. Department of Labor, 1975); but, not as a new edition, rather, as a supplement.

ethical points of view, but also more descriptive in some cases of the work performed. Firefighter, for example, is more clear than fireman; and supervisor has more meaning than foreman.

Certain exceptions to non-sexist language were found, however. Most notable were Advertising Lay-out Man, Art Lay-Out Man (Unit Group 3112), Draftsman (Unit Group 3712), and Public Relations Man (Unit Group 3127). Revisions in these titles, and others not mentioned, to eliminate sexist referents would facilitate a classification that reflects the fact that all occupations may be potentially filled by both men and women.

#### Summary and Comment

The need for a standard occupational classification is not questioned; however, the quality of this emerging document needs close scrutiny in order that it meets the needs of potential users. The draft copy of the Standard Occupational Classification contains a quality summary of occupations in the labor force, providing a more realistic picture of the scope of occupations in America. Minor problems exist in the structure and in the language used within the classification, but could be easily remedied.

One potential problem worth noting would be the failure to implement the classification. Are there plans developed to encourage or enforce the use of the SOC? What if you planned an SOC and no one used it?

Reference Note

1. Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget.  
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Appendix

### Major Suggested Classes of the SOC

1. Administrative, engineering, scientific, teaching and related occupations, including creative artists (Divisions A-G);
2. Technical, clerical, sales, and related occupations (Divisions H-K);
3. Service occupations (Division L);
4. Farming, forestry, fishing and hunting occupations (Division M);
5. Production occupations, including construction, extractive, transport, and related occupations (Divisions N-Z).

### Major Divisions of the SOC

- A. Executive, Administrative & Managerial Occupations (11-14)
- B. Engineers and Architects (16)
- C. Natural Scientists & Mathematicians (18)
- D. Social Scientists, Social Workers, Religious Workers and Lawyers (22)
- E. Teachers, Librarians and Counselors (25)
- F. Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners (28)
- G. Writers, Artists, Editors and Athletes (31)
- H. Health Technologists and Technicians (34)
- I. Technologists and Technicians, except Health (37)
- J. Marketing and Sales Occupations (41-43)
- K. Clerical Occupations (44-46)
- L. Service Occupations (51-53)
- M. Agriculture and Forestry, Fishers, Hunters (55-58)
- N. Constructive and Extractive (61-62)
- P. Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (64-65)
- Q. Mechanics and Repairers (67)

- S. Production Occupations (71-78)
- X. Elemental Occupations (81)
- Y. Military Occupations (91)
- Z. Miscellaneous Occupations (99)

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